

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-01 TRSE-00 XMB-04 OPIC-06
CIEP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 JUSE-00 SY-05 MCT-01
CU-04 IGA-02 /110 W
-----232123Z 111383 /67

P 231909Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8992
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA
AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

UNCLAS BOGOTA 12622

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, EAIR, PINS, PFOR, PGOV, ECON, CO
SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY: THE SPECIAL GOC MILITARY EXAMINER COMPLETED HIS INVESTIGATION OF THE LOCKHEED SCANDAL, RECOMMENDING CHARGES AGAINST SEVERAL FORMER OFFICERS. FINANCE MINISTER BOTERO RESIGNED AND WILL BE REPLACED BY ABDON ESPINOSA VALDERRAMA. ESPINOSA HELD THE SAME POSITION UNDER FORMER PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO FROM 1966 TO 1970. THE POLICE HAVE ARRESTED ADDITIONAL MEMBERS OF A SUSPECTED TERRORIST CELL FOLLOWING AN UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO FIRE BOMB A SEARS STORE. END SUMMARY.
2. GOC INVESTIGATION OF THE LOCKHEED SCANDAL. THE ARMED FORCES SPECIAL EXAMINER MAGISTRATE, VICE ADMIRAL EDUARDO MELENDEZ, HAS FINISHED HIS INVESTIGATION OF THE COLOMBIAN LOCKHEED SCANDAL AND HAS RECOMMENDED CRIMINAL CHARGES BE INITIATED AGAINST TWO FORMER COMMANDERS OF THE COLOMBIAN AIR FORCE, GENERAL FEDERICO RINCON PUENTES AND GENERAL JOSE RAMON CALDERON

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MOLANO, AND AGAINST COL. JUVAL GOMEZ OSPINA, FORMER AIR FORCE DIRECTOR OF AERONAUTICS. ALSO, THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE EXCHANGE CONTROL OFFICE MAY INVESTIGATE POSSIBLE FOREIGN EXCHANGE VIOLATIONS RELATED TO THE LOCKHEED AFFAIR BY FORMER MINISTER OF JUSTICE, SAMUEL HOYOS ARANGO. ACCORDING TO MELENDEZ, CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN LOCAL LOCKHEED AGENTS AND THE JOME OFFICE

IN 1973 AND 1974, AND TESTIMONY RECEIVED BY THE INVESTIGATIVE BODY DURING THE TEN-MONTH INVESTIGATION, REVEALED THAT LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCKHEED ALLEGEDLY WROTE THE HOME OFFICE REQUESTING \$298,000 TO ASSIST IN SELLING AIRPLANES TO THE COLOMBIAN AIR FORCE. THE U.S. HAD SUPPLIED THE "LOCKHEED LETTERS" TO THE MILITARY INVESTIGATIVE PANEL. THE ALLEGED BRIBES NOW UNDER INVESTIGATION DID NOT OCCUR IN 1967 WHEN THE THREE LOCKHEED HERCULES AIRPLANES WERE SOLD TO THE COLOMBIAN AIR FORCE. THE MONEY SUPPOSEDLY CHANGED HANDS IN 1974, WHEN REPAIRS AND SPARE PARTS WERE NEEDED FOR THESE PLANES (BOGOTA 12560).

3. FINANCE MINISTER BOTERO RESIGNS. MINISTER OF FINANCE RODRIGO BOTERO HAS PRESENTED HIS RESIGNATION TO PRESIDENT LOPEZ. BOTERO WILL BE REPLACED BY ABDON ESPINOSA, WHO HELD THE FINANCE PORTFOLIO DURING THE PRESIDENCY OF CARLOS LLERAS. THE APPOINTMENT OF ESPINOSA IS LIKELY TO REPRESENT A CHANGE IN STYLE MORE THAN IN SUBSTANCE. BOTERO WAS OFTEN CRITIZED FOR HIS INACCESSIBILITY AND HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO ESTABLISH OR MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE BANKING AND BUSINESS COMMUNITIES. ESPINOSA IS KNOWN TO BE MORE TACTFUL. HE IS HIGHLY REGARDED AS AN ECONOMIC PLANNER. IN HIS LETTER OF RESIGNATION, BOTERO CITED SEVERAL OF HIS ECONOMIC INITIATIVES. HE MENTIONED THAT THE TIME WAS RIGHT FOR HIM TO STEP DOWN SINCE HE HAS BECOME A POLITICAL LIABILITY FOR THE PRESIDENT. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD BE RETURNING TO PRIVATE LIFE (BOGOTA 12505). IN A LENGTHY REPLY, PRESIDENT LOPEZ REVIEWED THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION EMPHASIZING SUCCESSES IN THE ECONOMIC AREA. HE NOTED THAT BOTERO WOULD BE ESPECIALLY REMEMBERED FOR HIS TAX REFORM MEASURES.

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4. TERRORISTS ARRESTED. DURING THE WEEK COLOMBIAN POLICE CLAIMED TO HAVE ARRESTED SEVERAL MEMBERS OF A TERRORIST CELL CENTERED IN JORGE TADEO LOZANO UNIVERSITY IN BOGOTA. THE ARRESTS CAME IN THE AFTERMATH OF AN ATTEMPT BY THREE STUDENTS TO PLACE INCENDIARY DEVICES IN SEARS STORE ON DEC 16 (BOGOTA 12469). ACCORDING TO THE POLICE, THE ARRESTED STUDENTS HAVE ADMITTED BELONGING TO A RECENTLY FORMED 30-MEMBER CELL OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT, WHICH IS POSSIBLY AFFILIATED WITH THE TERRORIST NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY (EPL). THE POLICE ALSO ANNOUNCED THE DISCOVERY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRINTING MACHINES ALLEGEDLY USED TO PRINT PROPAGANDA FOR A NUMBER OF SUBVERSIVE GROUPS IN BOGOTA. SANCHEZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BRIBERY, INVESTIGATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BOGOTA12622
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760471-0530
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761214/aaaaamdf.tel
Line Count: 110
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUN 2004 by chengls>; APPROVED <10 DEC 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA
TAGS: ETRD, EAIR, PINS, PFOR, PGOV, ECON, CO, LOCKHEED
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006